

SADDAM HUSSEIN

The Fighter, the Thinker and the Man

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Part II Chapter 5

Growth Methodological propositions

"There is no growth for men or societies without challenges. Progress, like life, is a battlefield. These facts are never absent from the mind, since the history of human societies can scarcely be separated even today from military history (1)."

These few words were said by Servan-Schreiber, the French intellectual, in his book 'The American Challenge'. They sum up the essence of the contemporary world struggle, which is not only between existing states and organizations but also between the different civilizations that dominate the globe. If military struggles between the great powers present a picture, after the development of the atom bomb, similar to the vision of the end of the world in the Apocalypse of St. John, struggles between civilizations will alone continue until the ultimate stage of human development is reached.

What is the struggle between civilizations? It is the struggle for control over nature in its widest possible environmental, economic, social and political senses. The struggle initiated by Prometheus to make "knowledge" the property of all men without regard for sex, color or creed, to make it a tool for raising the social and moral level of all men, not the preserve of an elite.

There are few centuries in which man has leapt along the road of technical knowledge further than in twenty other centuries. Yet today scientists, intellectuals and historians all over the world agree that this has happened in our century. The nineteenth century, which was called "the Century of Marvels" because of the discoveries and scientific progress achieved by mankind after the Industrial Revolution, appears today as an ordinary century, hardly worthy of consideration. Even the Industrial Revolution itself, in comparison with the scientific and technological revolution that began in the middle of this century, appears as no more than the humble beginning, the embryo of a tremendous giant: as though the history of mankind is beginning afresh.

For long centuries the Arab nation remained in its various backward forms under the yoke of imperialism.

Most regions belonging to it were plunged into bloody struggles before they gained political independence. But they found that political independence without economic independence was an empty shell, lacking a life inside. If the real essence of any economic independence is freedom from dependence on the imperialist structure, the basic goal that

must lie behind it is final victory over backwardness and the possibility of total growth so that Arab Man may achieve the goals for which he is struggling: to build a new Arab civilization.

This is the Arab Man who once made one of the most brilliant civilizations that progressed spiritually and materially and had a great impact on human development as a whole. Then his great homeland was destroyed: its pristine unity fell apart, and it was only subsequently known in its dismembered form, in its numerous different segments. It saw poverty and backwardness as its resources were drained through the wars with the Crusaders that lasted until the thirteenth century. Then it saw a long period of Ottoman domination that lasted for more than three centuries. The very moment when his homeland, rent asunder, faced up to its backwardness happened to be the moment when Europe, fed with the fruits of its civilization, approached its colonial period.

Before it could open its eyes, it found Bonaparte's fleet knocking on its door.

In the first decades of the nineteenth century, Muhammad Ali began a new experiment that was progressive compared to what had gone before and what lay around.

But his experiment did not endure for long, and was only a gleaming isle in an ocean of darkness: an interlude in a period of backwardness. Imperialist Europe immediately intervened and surrounded it with its fleets, having broken the bridges that it had been able to build with the Arab hinterland. Then Europe smothered the experiment and let it choke to death.

It might be observed at this point that the problem of backwardness in the Arab homeland has only been raised as a problem that must be solved for about a quarter of a century. This should not be surprising. The last twenty-five years have seen the emergence of what is called the sleeping world or the Third World, according to the designation given to it by a French writer in 1956(2) after the Bandung Conference of 1955. This was a turning point in the history of the backward, sleeping countries. Whatever the accuracy of his statement that these countries were the equivalent of the "Third Estate" under the monarchy before the French Revolution-namely the totality of the people who did not belong to the noble class or the clergy-there is no doubt that this comparison has become widely accepted in academic and technical writings equally. It provides a new perspective on the problem of backwardness in all these countries for their peoples. There is no need to add that the Arab homeland is one of the units that make up this third, backward or sleeping world.

The West never stops talking about "the Arab World" or "the Arabs" who control the sources of oil, conspire to raise its price and cause numerous

economic and financial bottlenecks which cause difficulties for the inhabitants of Europe and America. It does this for its own purposes. Large sections of Western public opinion believe this lying propaganda because of their constant exposure to it and the absence of alternative media that can present the facts free from the distortions of the organizations that serve the oppressive classes in Western society itself. Despite the accuracy of the picture that we have already drawn, and which shows clearly and objectively that the greater part of the oil revenues of the Eastern parts of the Arab World that produce oil-with the exception of Iraq-eventually find their way back to the wheels of the world capitalist system, another important truth is that not only do the advanced industrial states of the West drain the Arab World, but the revenues of the whole Arab World, including the oil-producing areas, do not exceed a third of the budget of the U. S. A. In 1976, for instance, after the oil price increases that followed the October War; they did not reach the gross national product of Italy alone, which has less than 60,000,000 inhabitants-Less than half the total of the Arab homeland.

In 1976 the gross national product of all the Arab regions was 148.4 billion Dollars, whereas that of Italy alone was 163.6 billion Dollars. Of course, a comparison with the gross national product of rich states like France, that reached 346.5 billion Dollars in that year, or West Germany that reached 453.3 billion Dollars, would be quite impossible. And this is despite the great differences in national income between different Arab states that have already been referred to (3).

Such, then, is the Arab homeland. More than 150,000,000 people live in it and it contains the greatest strategic wealth in the world today, yet it is afflicted with backwardness and poverty.

What is the way to go beyond this backwardness?

What solutions may be proposed? How can comprehensive growth be achieved, so that the Arab World may look at the horizons of this age and begin to lay the foundation stones of a new Arab civilization? What are the models that the Arab experiment in growth must copy-if it really must copy models that lie outside it so as to achieve its goals?

What is Saddam Hussein's attitude to all the problems raised by these questions? Or, put differently, what is the ideology of growth-or progress-that he has built as an intellectual and which he struggles to implement, as the head of his society?

"To begin with, our calculations must take us away from the path of imitation. We must not imitate the movement of the big industrial states: their forms, perspectives and styles. We must not imitate them in the time it took them to reach their designated goal. This is because an imitative style--the traditional copying of a movement--will emphasize or even increase the backwardness that divides us from the advanced states. We

must, then, follow a new road, for our Revolution is the Revolution of the new road: the special road whose horizons lie in the thought and experiment of the whole world and the knowledge and skill presented by the human mind. It does not therefore imply that we are isolated if we seek a new road in all those things we consider necessary to our movement, for otherwise we shall remain backward and shall not reach the level that will give us our own particular place to follow our policies and build a new society. Otherwise, we shall become a satellite of others who define our movement, our role and our future at their whim-not at ours! This is what we reject absolutely (4)!"

This is the first methodological proposition set up by Saddam Hussein. The second methodological proposition is concerned with particularizing the Iraqi economy and endorsing the stamp that distinguishes it in a general sense:

"Until now, our economy has been one-sided, in the sense that the oil resources play a decisive role in it. Until now, a large proportion of it has been sold in capitalist markets where it is subjected to the plans that form the strategy of the great capitalist states which ensure that the price of crude oil is subject to the highs and lows of the capitalist market and its strategy. This has a negative effect on our reserves and impedes the implementation of socialism in our society (5)."

The third methodological proposition is concerned with an increased particularization together with a look at the nature of the age we live in, linking it with the nature of the other characteristics of the Iraqi economy:

"We are an agricultural country. Such a statement distorts, and is made with the object of keeping Iraq a backward country and keeping the sleeping countries as markets for the raw materials and trade of the capitalist countries. The world moves today in an age, which, as it is well known, is called the age of scientific and technical progress. It is well known that if a country's agriculture develops, it is impossible for that country to acquire the main features of scientific and technical progress, for its concern will be with agriculture, if we may suppose that that is possible (6)."

The fourth methodological proposition is concerned with denoting the goal that growth must have in the Iraqi economy:

"Our country must be agricultural and industrial at the same time. It is a fact that it is impossible for agriculture to flourish really in our country without our country also being industrial and developed in the main areas of industrial development. In the same way, our area, Iraq, cannot become a developed industrial country that is able to progress in the field of industry without there being a link between the areas of industrial development and the required flourishing of agriculture. The reasons for this are well-known (7)."

After these four methodological propositions we must now ask: if it is true that the basic factors that cause growth are three, as the books written by most economists, politicians and managers assert-the power of labour, the different forms of capital, and what is called "know-how" under which are placed the skill and technology needed for production and organization-then what is Saddam Hussein ' s conception of these three factors in relation to economic growth in Iraqi society, strictly speaking?

Notes

- 1) 1.1. at- Tahaddi al-Amriki (The American Challenge), Arabic translation, Baghdad, Maktabat an-Nahdha, p. 313.
- 2) Alfred Sauvy, French economist and demographer, the first to use the expression "The Third World".
- 3) See Ali Ahmad 'Aciqa, op. cit., Table 6, p. 16.
- 4) Saddam Hussein, Tariquna Khass fi Bina' al-Ishtirakiyya (Our Method of building Socialism is peculiar to us), discussion in The Planning Council, 12-4-1977.
- 5) Saddam Hussein, Unqulu Taqalid al-Hizb ila ad-Dawla (Transfer the Party Traditions to the State), discussion in The Party's preparatory school, 26-5-1976.
- 6) Saddam Hussein, loc. cit.
- 7) Ibid.